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It thus appears that all the topics treated of in these Dissertations are of great interest to the medical profession, and to the cause of human suffering. We have said that they are ably and judiciously discussed. We scarcely need have said it, for it was already sufficiently told in the award of the prizes by a learned and impartial committee. We doubt not the author will take a high stand among the best medical writers of the country.

16. — *The Progress of Democracy; illustrated in the History of Gaul and France*. By ALEXANDRE DUMAS. Translated by an American. New York: J. & H. G. Langley. 12mo. pp. 376.

WE can see no reason why this work was selected for translation and publication in this country. Whatever interest attaches to it, seems to exist only for French readers, and with them even to be ephemeral in character, depending on the politics of the day. The historical information it contains can here be more directly obtained from more trustworthy sources; and the application of the narrative, — the author's argument, if it can be called such, — besides being discreditable to him in spirit and execution, offers little that is novel or instructive to the American reader, in respect to the present movement of parties in France. The title of the work in the original is simply "*Gaule et France*," which the translator has dilated into a sentence, that expresses one branch, though not, as we believe, the whole of the author's purpose. We have not at hand the means for comparing the book with the original, though judging from a cursory examination, the translator's task seems to be executed with tolerable care and fidelity. Some technical terms in politics, however, seem to be incorrectly or inadequately rendered. The word translated *copyholders* in the conclusion of the work, according to the context, must mean *taxpayers*, for the qualifications of the deputies and of their electors depend on the amount of contribution to the revenue of the country, and not on the direct value of their real property. The phrase which is rendered *proprietary interest*, would be more accurately expressed as *landed interest*. The established appellation in English for one dynasty of French kings is *Carlovingian*, and not *Carolingian*. We object further to the strange and antiquated orthography of proper names, which is introduced to show the etymology and meaning of the word, although this fault is attributable to Dumas, and not to his translator. The derivation of the name

may properly be mentioned in a note, but there is no reason for constantly repeating it in the body of the text. We hardly recognise familiar historical characters under the uncouth and ludicrous appellations of *Hlot-her* and *Merewig*.

Dumas is one of the most active members of the new French school in literature and politics. The peculiarities of style and opinion, which these men have rendered popular among their countrymen, are strongly marked in the work before us. Though recommended by great vigor and boldness, they are for the most part equally offensive to good taste and sound principle. Their application to politics is the only point which invites remark in the present connexion, and under this aspect we are free to say, they appear utterly detestable. The earnestness of manner, which sincere politicians may well exhibit, in these men degenerates into utter ferocity, which, united with bold impiety, and a reckless, innovating spirit, forcibly reminds one of the blood-stained actors, the Dantons and Saint-Justs, of the former revolution. Forcible language and imagery convey little pleasure, when they serve as a vehicle for such atrocious sentiments, and are acquired by the sacrifice of every other consideration. There is an occasional affectation of reasoning from first principles, and of introducing profound and sententious reflections; but the philosophy of the writer is too shallow to merit a serious refutation. The following is one of his wise remarks. "It is remarkable, that the civilization which conquers barbarism, is fraught with inherent decay; while the barbarism that conquers civilization bears a fertilizing and self-perpetuating principle." *Ex pede Herculem*. There is a great display of curious and antiquarian erudition, but we must doubt the thoroughness of the author's studies, for his learning bears a suspicious air of being got up for the occasion. The laws against sedition under the French government must be tolerably lax, or the author's bold anticipation of the fate of the present dynasty, would ere now have attracted the attention of the tribunals. He traces the descent of the monarchy "from the feudal heights, where Hugh Capet laid the foundation of his edifice, to the popular plains where Louis Philippe, — probably the last king of this race, — has pitched his tent of a day." The present monarch is to be succeeded by a form of government entirely popular, — "a quinquennial magistracy, probably"; the chief officer in which must be born among the people, and possess wealth not above the average of private fortunes. He can therefore be "neither a man of the blood-royal, nor a great proprietary."

"This is the Charybdis where the present government will be engulfed. The Pharos that we light upon its route will illumine only

its wreck; for even if the pilot were disposed to tack, he no longer has the power to do so; the current which drags the ship onward is too rapid, and the gale which propels it is too strong. But, at the hour of its destruction, the recollections of a man, overpowering those of a citizen, will cause one voice to exclaim, *Death to royalty,—but God save the King!*

“That voice will be mine!” — p. 376.

It is difficult to give any precise account of the general plan of a work so anomalous in its character. The writer reviews the history of France, from the period of its conquest by the Romans, down to the accession of Philip de Valois, giving, however, but a meagre account of the principal facts, and inlaying the chronological framework with striking anecdotes, and arabesque passages from the elder historians. The writings and collections of Augustin Thierry, one of the most distinguished of the modern French historians, appear to have furnished the chief part of these materials. Among the scattered and picturesque narrations may be found the groundwork of more than one historical drama, which Dumas has prepared for the French stage; and we suspect, therefore, that these researches into the early annals of France were first instituted with a view of obtaining dramatic materials. But our author is a political reformer of the most radical school, and a fanciful theory occurring to him in the midst of his investigations, he throws the fruits of his studies into a new shape, in order to give it expression. Hasty generalizations on a narrow basis of facts, are somewhat characteristic of French speculation. The theory is, that from the earliest period, the power of the French monarchy has been constantly declining from its extreme elevation, and spreading itself out for support upon a wider basis, till now but one short and unimportant step separates it from its natural resting-place, the heads of the whole people. As there are some difficulties in this sweeping view, arising from the comparison, for instance, of a power so absolute as that of Louis the Fourteenth, with the far more limited authority of many of his remote predecessors, it was necessary to pass rapidly over the early history of the country, and give a proper moulding to the most stubborn facts, so that they might not, in appearance at least, contradict the hypothesis. Freaks of this sort on the part of some modern historians, are enough to shake all one's confidence in their previous knowledge of the events of by-gone times. Give an expert speculatist of this class but canvass enough, on which to arrange his selected facts, and distribute the lights and shades according to his will, and he will cause the picture of antiquity to assume any appearance; he will establish the

most absurd theory in politics or philosophy on the sure basis of universal history. The system of Dumas really gains as much from the imagery which he uses in expounding it, as from the facts directly adduced in its support. The dome of the national monarchy, too vast and elevated to be supported by Hugh Capet's single hand, was propped by him with the twelve grand vassals of the crown, who, like huge pillars, sustained the edifice. The downfall of the feudal system shattered these columns, and Louis the Eleventh, scattering their fragments to the winds, stood alone in the centre to support the superstructure. His successors were too feeble for this mighty task, and Francis the First remedied the loss of the twelve massive columns, by erecting in their stead a multitude of inferior ones, by substituting two hundred great seigniors for the grand vassals. The dome rested at a lower level, but its strength was increased by the depression. The reformation sealed the doom of these nobles also, and Richelieu appeared as their exterminator. Louis the Fourteenth ascended the throne as the sole supporter of the monarchical edifice, and held all the strings of royalty attached to himself, "with such a firm and long-continued tension, that he foresaw they would snap in pieces in the hands of his successors." Released from his grasp, "the monarchy was to be reorganized;" and "in place of the twelve grand vassals of Hugh Capet, and two hundred grand lords of Francis the First, Louis the Fifteenth was forced to prop his tottering edifice with the fifty thousand aristocrats of the Orleans regency." "The third era of the national royalty had brought forth its fruits, fruits of the Lake Asphaltus, full of ashes and rotteness." A few years more, and "Louis the Sixteenth saw gleaming in the East the flames of the Bastile, and in the West the iron of the guillotine."

NOTE

TO ARTICLE VI. OF NUMBER CXI.

IN our recent article on the "Cochin-Chinese Language," we stated, that we had not seen in any English or French publication a notice of Mr. Du Ponceau's work on "Chinese Writing," until the appearance of that in the London "Monthly Review" for December last, which was taken from our own pages. This was an error; a hastily written article, misconceiving and misstating Mr. Du Ponceau's views, had previously appeared in the "Foreign Quarterly Review"; but the article had made so slight an impression upon us, that it had escaped our recollection, when we made the statement which is now corrected.